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Too much stress can hardly be laid on the author's ground principle, that where a method aims to regulate the modulation of the voice by rules, then inconsistencies and lack of organic coherence begin to take the place of that sense of life which lies at the heart of every true product of art. On the contrary, where vocal expression is studied as a manifestation of the processes of thinking, there results the truer energy of the student's powers and the more natural unity of the complex elements of his expression. —Dr. Lyman Abbott, in *The Outlook*.

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SPOKEN ENGLISH. A method of Improving Speech and Reading by Studying Voice Conditions and Modulations in Union with their Causes in Thinking and Feeling.

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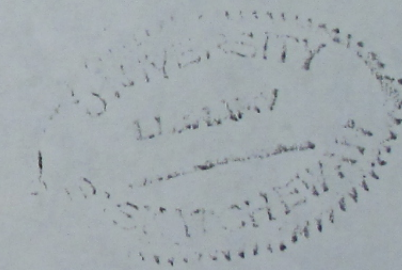
SPOKEN ENGLISH

A METHOD OF IMPROVING SPEECH AND READING BY STUDYING VOICE CONDITIONS AND MODULATIONS IN UNION WITH THEIR CAUSES IN THINKING AND FEELING

S. S. CURRY, PH. D., LITT. D.

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AN INITIATORY WORD

During recent years greater interest than ever before has been awakened to the importance of Written English. Spoken English, however, for the most part, is still either entirely neglected or else taught by mechanical, imitative and artificial methods.

Dr. Charles W. Eliot once remarked: "The primary characteristic of an educated man is his ability to speak and to write his own language with efficiency." We learn to speak before we learn to write, and the way we speak in every-day conversation is the basis of our style in writing. Hence, when rightly considered, correct speaking is at least as necessary to the proper use of our own language as writing, and must be ever regarded as a fundamental part of education.

This book is an endeavor to furnish such methods for the development of Spoken English as will parallel the work of Written English during the last years of the Grammar or the first years of the High School or Normal School; and to furnish hints upon the problem of teaching reading and of improving the voice.

The teaching of the right use of the voice and of all phases of spoken English demands primarily insight into mental and emotional conditions. In writing there is something objective for the teacher to mark, something external that the student himself can see, and well-settled rules of grammar to be obeyed. In spoken English, however, rules cannot be laid down except for such mere grammatical aspects as are common to both writing and speaking.

Spoken English is a psychological problem. To regard reading and speaking as a mere matter of correct pronunciation or obedience to certain rules of grammar is to misconceive the nature of expression.

The problem primarily concerns thinking; in fact, right vocal expression requires imagination and feeling, and the harmonious awakening of all man's power and the unity of his experiences.

The modulations of the voice perform a distinct function.

The spoken word, not the written word, is the real word. Written words are symbols, and are more adequate to express ideas, but modulations of the voice are natural signs which reveal feeling and manifest degrees of assimilation and the deepest phases of experience. Written words represent the concepts of the mind, but modulations directly manifest the action or processes of thinking or conditions of feeling.

To improve spoken English the teacher must, therefore, awaken the student to think and to feel. All the faculties of the mind must be made active so that the creative energies will dominate the rhythm of breathing and of voice conditions as well as cause the dramatic response of the body and modulation of the voice. In any art work, — writing or speaking, painting or music, — the first step should always be the awakening of the artistic powers.

Vocal expression as a phase of artistic endeavor implies cause, means and effect. The cause is in the mind. It must be awakened. The means, that is, voice and body, must be rightly attuned so as immediately to respond to the actions or conditions of the mind. In the third place, the significance of the voice modulations must be understood and a vocabulary of delivery must be acquired.

Writing implies a mechanical means, such as pen, ink and paper. While a man must learn to write, that is, to make the letters properly, this mechanical work is not analogous to vocal training. The agents of speech belong to man's own body. They are parts of man's organism. They can be developed only according to natural laws. Control of thinking must be secured not by mere will, but only by awakening or stimulating imagination, thinking and feeling.

There are other peculiarities. Many of the voice modulations are but partly under the control of the will. Many of the highest and most exalted modulations, such as tone color, must be controlled indirectly. To bring the voice modulations directly under the control of will makes all speaking mechanical and artificial.

In order to write, imagination and feeling and the crea-

tive energies must be awakened. But the modulations of the voice and the actions of the body, which have been called the natural languages, require the spontaneous energies to be aroused. Though this awakening of the imagination and deeper life of the student be difficult, it is necessary if the student is really to improve. The aim of education, according to Fröbel, is to awaken self-activity. Self-activity must be awakened if vocal expression is to be improved.

To awaken and to recognize the operation of this self-activity must ever be the primary aim in all true education from the kindergarten to the university. Of all methods of awakening and testing spontaneous activity, vocal expression is best. It is the direct, natural manifestation of the activities of the student's faculties; as the teacher observes this he gets insight into the student's mind, and can detect weaknesses or lack of harmony. He can direct exercises to awaken any sluggish faculty; he can stimulate the imagination; he can develop feeling. He will not teach a play of Shakespeare in a way to kill all the student's love for it, but from the first will try to awaken the student's feeling and stimulate that which is more important than all criticism, a proper appreciation and love of great literature and art.

The book is founded upon the principle that impression and expression should always go together. Hence, nature study and observation are introduced or suggested at every step of the way. Impression and expression cannot be separated. One is cause, the other is effect. They are co-ordinated as the root of the plant with its stalk. They complement and imply each other. We do not know a thing until we are able to give it some kind of expression. The saying of anything tests the student's understanding. Writing tests accuracy and correctness. Speaking tests right feeling, the right attitude of being and the degree of assimilation. It shows how far the word has become a part of one's experience.

There is an endeavor in this book to avoid difficult technicalities, especially in vocal training. The develop-

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ment of the voice is an extremely complex subject. If taken, however, simply and naturally before there has been pernicious teaching there will be less difficulty. One of the most important steps is the correct method of breathing. Teachers should refer to the author's "Mind and Voice" for further explanation.

The fundamental principle is to have a right action of the diaphragm, that is to say, sympathetic fulness in the middle of the body. A breath should be easily and sympathetically and harmoniously retained by the elastic activity of the diaphragm and other inspiratory muscles. Mere analysis of the actions of the diaphragm and of the correct method of breathing will not be so helpful to the young student as simple laughter and observation of the action of breathing and the throat. The tone should be supported freely at the diaphragm. There should be the feeling of a column of air in the middle of the mouth. The whole throat should be passive and relaxed and open. The right condition of the throat and tone passage can result only from the right retention of the breath, the co-ordination of activity, or an elastic sense of fulness in the middle of the body, with the right passivity of the throat. This causes large vowel chambers and free open tone and must be gained by the sympathetic rendering of exclamations repeated many times with an accentuation of the right preparatory conditions. This is the primary aim of all true vocal exercises.

The companion volume to this contains simple questions or problems arranged with short selections for inductive studies and more than three hundred complete poems and stories. The books contain no duplicate selections and the topics more or less correspond. Hence, teachers may use them together, or separately.

Work in vocal expression should be practical. The studies should be simple and direct, by question or assignment of various problems for the study and interpretation of literature by voice. Every form of vocal expression, conversation, reading and recitation should be adopted. Conversation must always be the basis. Students must be encouraged to talk about what they have studied. They should be encouraged to tell stories and to describe what they themselves have seen. In every way the teacher should stimulate students to unfold their own powers.

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SPOKEN ENGLISH

I

RECEIVING IDEAS

I. READING AND TALKING

The year's at the spring,
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hill-side's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn;
God's in His Heaven—
All's right with the world!

"Pippa Passes."

Robert Browning

Read aloud the song of Pippa; then give the meaning in your own words. Were there any differences in the variations of your voice between your reading and your conversation? What variations in your talking were absent from your reading and what was the chief cause of the difference?

WILD ROSES AND SNOW

How sweet the sight of roses
In country lanes of June,
Where every flower uncloses
To meet the kiss of noon.

How strange the sight of roses —
Roses both sweet and wild —
Seen where a valley closes
'Mid mountain heights up-piled;

Upon whose sides remaining
Is strewn the purest snow,
By its chill power restraining
The tide of spring's soft glow.

Yet God, who gave the pureness
To yon fair mountain snow,
Gives also the secureness
Whereby these roses blow.

Mackenzie Bell

Tell someone about some interesting object or event, a walk or a ball game for example. Notice your voice in talking — how freely it leaps about. Now read something and observe where and why your reading differs from your talking.

Take a short poem, such as the preceding, or some fable, calling one word at a time as if you were dictating, and observe the action of your voice. Then genuinely think and live the ideas, introducing them to people as something for them to think about. Observe the difference that results in the modulations of your voice.

Sometimes in reading your voice falls into a steady, meaningless drone, instead of gathering words into groups and skipping lightly from one to another as it does when you talk. When we read we are apt to see each word by itself, and pronounce one after another, without thinking of the ideas each helps to represent.

In talking, however, we "think before we speak." First comes an idea, and the words to express it follow. Ideas should come to us in a similar way when we read, for though we get the idea after we see the words, yet we hold the idea in the mind before we speak them.

From all these illustrations we can see that the difference between our reading and talking results from our difference in thinking. When we do not think, our reading is bad. When we genuinely think and feel and live the ideas our reading appears free and natural.

When we take up any little poem or fable to read we should let our eyes glance through the words until we get an idea. The words ought to set us thinking; we should then hold our mind upon that one thing which the group of words suggests. Finally, we should speak these words naturally and easily while holding the idea.

One cause of our uttering words on one pitch without thinking of what they mean is that we endeavor to take in too many of them at a time. This is what we tend to do when we take words as words; the eye runs far ahead of the mind.

Instead, take only one idea and the words belonging to

it. Hold this definitely; not only until you realize it, but until you have uttered it. Then take time to get another and to utter that. If you do this and take hold of one phrase or idea and utter it as if you want someone to think and feel it with you, you will find at once that you are reading more naturally and easily than before.

IF WORDS WERE BIRDS

If words
Were birds
And swiftly flew
From tips
Of lips
Owned, dear, by you,
Would they,
To-day,
Be hawks and crows,
Or blue
And true
And sweet — who knows?

Let's play,
To-day,
We choose the best;
Birds blue
And true
With dove-like breast.
'Tis queer,
My dear,
We never knew
That words
Like birds
Had wings and flew.

Author not known

Why is it easy to read the preceding poem? Because every line is short, grouping the words and tending to make you stop an instant and think one idea and grasp one phrase at a time.

THE FIRST ROBIN

Welcome, welcome, little stranger;
Fear no harm and fear no danger.
We are glad to see you here,
For you sing, "Sweet spring is near."

Now the white snow melts away;
Now the flowers blossom gay.
Come, dear bird, and build your nest,
For we love our robin best.

Louisa May Alcott

Suppose a boy who loves birds discovers a robin, the first robin of the spring, and runs to tell someone about it. He will be excited, full of joy; he will breathe deeply; his face will brighten and his body expand. Can you give some phrase of your own as he would give it in telling someone about the discovery of a robin?

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The words of a poem or fable or lyric must be familiar, otherwise you may be thinking of the words for their own sake, and not of the ideas which they represent. In reading you must always realize the ideas for which the words stand. Words are nothing in themselves; they are only symbols. The real source of all our expression must be in ideas.

WHAT DO WE PLANT WHEN WE PLANT THE TREE?

What do we plant when we plant the tree?
We plant the ship which will cross the sea.
We plant the mast to carry the sails;
We plant the planks to withstand the gales —
The keel, the keelson and beam and knee;
We plant the ship when we plant the tree.

What do we plant when we plant the tree?
We plant the houses for you and me;
We plant the rafters, the shingles, the floors,
We plant the studding, the laths, the doors,
The beams and siding, all that be;
We plant the house when we plant the tree.

What do we plant when we plant the tree?
A thousand things that we daily see;
We plant the spire that out-towers the crag,
We plant the staff for our country's flag,
We plant the shade, from the hot sun free;
We plant all these when we plant the tree!

Henry Abbey

For example, in this poem on the tree, certain ideas will come as a surprise to you. In the second line when you take in the first four words, and especially the word "ship," though you wonder what a tree has to do with a ship, a vivid picture will arise in your mind and you will give this word with force.

Other ideas about a tree will come before you, and if you realize truly you will give them with similar force, — the word "houses" for instance.

Can you ask the questions in this little poem about the wind and answer them as definitely and naturally as if you were talking to someone?

Who has seen the wind?
Neither I nor you;
But when the leaves hang trembling
The wind is passing through.
Who has seen the wind?
Neither you nor I;
But when the trees bow down their heads
The wind is passing by.

Christina G. Rossetti

THE CROWS AND THE WINDMILL

There was once a windmill which went round and round day after day. It did harm to no one. It never knocked anyone down unless he got within reach of its great arms. What if it did use the air? Surely there was no harm in that. The air was just as good as before.

But a flock of crows in the neighborhood took quite a dislike to the innocent mill. They said there must be some mischief about it. They did not at all like the swinging of those long arms for a whole day at a time.

It was thought best to call a meeting of all the crows in the country, far and near, to see if some plan could not be hit upon by which the dangerous thing could be gotten rid of.

The meeting was held in a corn-field. Such a cawing and chattering was never heard before in that neighborhood. They appointed a chairman, or rather a chair-crow.

As is usual in public meetings, there were many different opinions. Most of the crows thought the windmill a dangerous thing indeed, a very dangerous thing; but as to the best mode of getting rid of it, that was not so easy a matter to decide. Some were for active measures. They proposed going straight over to the windmill — all the crows in a body — and destroying it on the spot.

In justice to the crow family in general, however, it ought to be stated that those who talked about this warlike plan were rather young. Their feathers had not grown to their full length, and they had not seen so much of the world as their fathers had.

After a good deal of loud talking and blustering, one old crow said he had a question to ask. He would beg leave to inquire through the chairman, whether the windmill had ever been known to go away from the place where it was then standing, and to chase crows about with murderous intent.

It was answered that such conduct on the part of the giant had never been heard of.

"How, then," the speaker wished to know, "was it likely to kill any of them?"

The answer was, "By their venturing too near the mill."

"And that is the only way that any of us are likely to get killed by the windmill?" pursued the venerable crow.

"Yes," the chairman said; "that is the way, I believe."

And the crows generally nodded their heads, as much as to say, "Certainly, of course."

"Well, then," said the speaker, "let's keep out of harm's way. That's all I have to say."

In reading this fable act and talk as the young crows would. Then be the calm old crow who quietly asks his question. Give it as if you were talking, making yourself part of the story. Do not be afraid to talk as you feel.

If you have tried the experiment suggested, if you have talked understandingly, and observed the action of your mind, then have read with similar action of your mind, you must have found one thing to be true, namely, — that to read well you must think — think only one thing at a time but realize each phrase before you speak it. Whenever we talk in a way to interest others we are genuinely thinking, and we must do the same when reading.

II. ATTENTION AND MENTAL PICTURES

When Amruzail describes what he has seen,
Speaking of sands and flocks and hilltops green,
Such magic in his voice and language lies,
That all his hearers' ears are turned to eyes.

Persian.

In reading "The Bluebird" what do you find your mind doing? Possibly you see the sky, then the coat of blue; perhaps you see next the rosy vest, then the round throat, then the silver tint of tail and wing.

In thinking the mind tends to reproduce objects referred to, to create them out of what it has seen before, if they are entirely new, or if they have never been observed; but the mind must act in its own way. We need to give definite attention and hold whatever comes into our minds as an impression that will cause expression.

THE BLUEBIRD

A bit of sky to make a coat;
A rosy vest and rounded throat;
A silver tint in tail and wing;
A joyous song about the spring.

Author not known

While the mind must be permitted to act in its own way, yet we must be sure that we make it active; to see pictures we must give attention to one thing at a time.

Read this poem aloud and allow your mind to make pictures of its own accord. Let it see things which you can hold and enjoy, one at a time.

SPRING

Green the grass is springing,
Tiny leaves appear,
Cowslips dot the meadows,
Violets are here;
All the birds are coming, —
See them on the wing;
You can hear them singing,
"We are glad 'tis spring."

From "The Kindergarten Review."

Blanche Weymouth

If you read these lines and enjoy them, leaves and birds will spring up at once in your mind. But how about cowslips? They will spring up likewise if you have observed them and learned to admire them, but if you do not know them you will see only a word.

Violets are familiar flowers, but if you have not closely studied and enjoyed them, even "violets" will be only a word and will awaken no picture in your mind.

SOME SMALL SWEET WAY

There's never a rose in all the world
But makes some green spray sweeter;
There's never a wind in all the sky
But makes some bird wing fleeter.
There's never a star but brings to Heaven
Some silver radiance tender;
And never a rosy cloud but helps
To crown the sunset splendor;
No robin but may thrill some heart,

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His dawn-like gladness voicing;
 God gives us all some small sweet way
 To set the world rejoicing.

Author not known

We should read a great variety of poems and passages, giving definite attention to each item; and while we allow the mind to make pictures freely and naturally, yet we should be sure that we move from one picture to another. We must hold attention upon one and enjoy it before leaving it. Then we must move with decision to another and let this progressive movement of the mind from one idea or image to another determine the way we speak the word and all the conditions and actions of our voices. We must not only allow the mind freedom in thinking but we must hold our impressions and allow them a direct response in expressing the phrase which represents the picture.

A WONDER STORY

A bunch of dry and withered leaves
 To a bare, brown willow clung,
 And all through winter's storms and snows
 In the chilling breezes swung.
 And when the gentle springtime came,
 And the tree was dressed in green,
 Still hanging to the topmost twig,
 Might the withered leaves be seen.
 But lo, from out the withered leaves
 Came a glorious butterfly,
 And spread its glittering wings for flight,
 Up in the heavens so high.

Author not known

Do you know the life of a butterfly? Did you ever find a "bunch of dry and withered leaves" clinging to a willow? Find one in the country some time; take it home with you and wait. You have seen how beautiful the butterflies are among the flowers, but when you know something more about them than their color, and have watched their lives, other pictures arise in your mind with the word "butterfly," and you see things which would never have come to you but for this careful observation.

THE PUSSY-CAT BIRD

To-day when the sun shone just after the shower,
 A song bubbled up from the lilac-tree bower
 That changed of a sudden to quavers so queer,
 For a moment I thought something wrong in my ear.
 Then I called little Dempster, and asked if he heard,
 "Oh, yes!" he replied; "it's the pussy-cat bird."

The pussy-cat bird has the blackest of bills,
 With which she makes all her trebles and trills:
 She can mimic a robin, or sing like a wren,
 And I truly believe she can cluck like a hen;
 And sometimes you dream that her song is a word,
 Then quickly again — she's a pussy-cat bird!

The pussy-cat bird wears a gown like a nun,
 But she's chirk as a squirrel, and chock-full of fun.
 She lives in a house upon Evergreen-lane, —
 A snug little house, although modest and plain;
 And never a puss that was happier purred
 Than the feathered and winged little pussy-cat bird.

"A Boy's Book of Rhyme."

Clinton Scollard

Are birds strangers to you, or do you know at once from the song, color or form that one is a robin, another a blue-bird, another a song-sparrow, another a blackbird, another an oriole?

You think it hard work to become familiar with birds, but if you will begin to observe, very soon you will have become acquainted with a great many. I know a little boy who learned to name nearly a hundred in one summer. He had written their names and described them, and he was not eleven years old. He did not have much instruction; he was simply set to work, a few characteristics of various birds were told him, and he kept on observing till he had made a catalogue of them.

LEAVES

Take any common leaf into your hand and look at it. Pick up the leaf of the strawberry, for instance. See how prettily it is notched! Hold it up to the light and notice the lines that run from the middle to the edges. Then look at the fine network between these lines. How delicate and lovely it all is!

Beautiful and interesting as leaves are, few people notice



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